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## **WMU Research Center Will Keep, Grow Jobs in Region**

### ***Senator George Secures \$10M for Life Science Research Center, Says No to Brain Drain of Kalamazoo Valley***

LANSING – Calling it a unique private-public partnership designed to create jobs and preserve “intellectual capital” in the Kalamazoo Valley, Sen. Tom George today announced he has secured \$10 million to fund the Western Michigan University Life Sciences Research and Commercialization Center through the Higher Education budget.

“This is my community, this is my home, I could not stand idly by and watch the brain drain of the Kalamazoo Valley,” said George

“This is a way to capture the intellectual capitol of Southwest Michigan that is at risk due to the Pfizer acquisition,” George said. “We have forged a partnership with government, academia and the private sector to keep jobs in our area. The Center will also help lay the foundation for continuation of the presence of life sciences research in the Kalamazoo Valley.”

George, R-Texas Township, made the announcement immediately preceding a vote by the Senate Appropriations Committee to adopt the 2004 higher education budget. Joining him at the announcement were Senator Majority Leader Ken Sikkema, Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Sen. Mike Goschka, and Western Michigan University President Judith Bailey.

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Created in response to the Pfizer layoffs in the region, the center will be a new home for many former Pfizer highly skilled workers and researchers. Nearly 1,500 research and development jobs are being eliminated and those individuals are currently being recruited to companies outside the state.

“Senator George has worked hand in hand with his legislative colleagues from southwest Michigan to address the significant economic issues resulting from the Pfizer acquisition of Pharmacia,” said Dr. Bailey. “I commend the vision and leadership of Senator George and his colleagues for their efforts to provide the resources to create a world-class life sciences center at Western Michigan University. The Center will be instrumental in retaining the scientific talent so essential to furthering our state’s position in the life sciences.”

"In the 1980s, Michigan sat by and watched as a generation of skilled workers left the state; we are not going to do that again," Sikkema said. "Today we are saying we will do everything possible to keep our highly skilled and trained workers on the job in Michigan. The first step toward 'cool' and 'hip' cities is to keep and create good-paying, high-tech jobs."

"I commend Senator George’s innovative ideas and leadership skills in forging this partnership,” Senator Goschka said. “Western Michigan University is a wonderful place to create a life science center."

The center will use the expertise of the scientists to discover new drugs through such means as computational and medicinal chemistry, target identification and high throughput screening. Unique in its staffing by pharmaceutical professionals, it will be the only university center of its kind in the world.